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ABSTRACT

Designed to meet needs of expectant and new working parents, these curriculum materials provide guidelines for instructors and discussions of six parent education topics. The curriculum begins by examining the qualifications an instructor should have before attempting to teach expectant or working parents. Subsequently described are specific ways in which curriculum materials can be organized into a class series or single session classes. Marketing suggestions are provided. The core of the curriculum is then presented in discussions of: (1) parental leaves; (2) resolution of the problem of deciding whether to return to work or remain at home; (3) location of high quality infant day care; (4) breastfeeding and working; (5) time management for working parents; and (6) postpartum issues for working parents. Presented for each topic area are background information, an outline of topics to teach, and a list of recommended readings. (RH)

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THE WORKING PARENTS' CURRICULUM

class designs to meet the

needs of expectant and new

working parents

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MARY PARYS O'BRIEN

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Introduction

The statistics are overwhelming from a number of standpoints. According to the United States Department of Labor, nearly 90% of the women currently in the workforce who are in their childbearing years (15-44) will become pregnant at least once during their working careers. The majority of these women will return to work before their babies' first birthdays. In 1986, 65% of new mothers returned to the workforce within a year of giving birth. This is especially striking considering that in 1977 only 23% of all mothers with children under the age of six were working outside their homes. Today that figure is 56%.

When I began teaching childbirth education classes in 1980, the trend toward working motherhood was already increasing. While sexual adjustment and baby care basics remain important issues for postpartum discussions, the "hot topic" in many childbirth education classes today has become returning to work. In order to meet that need, I began looking for ways to cover postpartum working parenthood within my classes.

Covering the standard postpartum issues within a six to eight week childbirth education class is, at best, a challenging proposition. Even if adjustment to working parenthood is identified as a valid topic for presentation, time constraints may prevent including these issues in current class frameworks. The final class nights have traditionally been slated for covering postpartum concerns. These evenings also double as "catch-up" nights, which realistically may relegate postpartum to the last twenty minutes of

the final class.

Another difficulty is the psychological readiness of couples in childbirth education classes to deal with postpartum concerns. Considering the focus on the majority of class nights, it may be impossible for couples in the midst of preparing for birth to switch gears mentally at the end of a class series. While couples are encouraged to think about being parents, they are still worried about "becoming" parents. The immediacy of the impending birth may cause them to prefer a simulated labor and one last practice of breathing techniques on the final class night to discussions focused on postpartum issues.

Expectant couples often tend to approach parenthood with rose colored glasses. Theirs is the baby who will sleep through the night from the day s/he is born. Someone else in class's baby will have colic, but not theirs. And, as more than one expectant parent has said, their lifestyle isn't going to change after the baby is born. The baby will simply fit into their lifestyle--and that includes going back to work. It is easy to see why postpartum working concerns take a back seat in most classes.

Initially I began by offering a mini-seminar on finding day care to class participants. The seminar was held forty-five minutes before the fourth night of class. Couples were encouraged to bring their dinner along as we discussed the various day care options available to them. This approach did not work for two reasons.

First, couples always expressed great interest in the topic but many were unable to get to the seminar. All too often, as couples came into class and saw the ongoing discussion, they would turn to

each other and say, "Was that tonight?" An increasing number of expectant parents were coming to class directly from work. Consequently they were unable to schedule the additional time into their schedule. Others felt picking up brochures about different day care facilities (which were made available in class) would be sufficient.

Second, a discussion of day care involves much more than discussing center versus home based care. Shortly into the seminar expectant parents would raise related questions, such as, "When is the best time to go back to work?" "Should I go back to work at all?" "I can't get my manager to explain the company's maternity leave policy, so I don't know when to start looking for day care." "Will leaving the baby in day care affect her development?" Forty-five minutes was barely enough time to cover the nuts and bolts issues of day care, much less answer questions. It was frustrating for the participants (and me!) to be unable to address many of the larger, extremely important issues they were raising.

Consequently, I was convinced of the need for a separate class--or series of classes--for expectant and new working parents. The result has been a number of different approaches offered through a variety of organizations. These have been incorporated into the WORKING PARENTS' CURRICULUM. The curriculum begins by examining the qualifications an instructor dealing with working parent concerns should have. It then describes some specific ways the curriculum can be organized into a class series or single session classes. Marketing suggestions are presented. Finally, six areas are presented as topics that are of concern to expectant and new working parents. These form the basis of the curriculum. Background information, a what to teach

outline and recommended readings are presented for each of the topic areas. How you design your specific curriculum will be dependent on who your clientele is; the method you feel will be most effective in reaching your clientele; the background and qualifications of the instructor; financial considerations and other community resources for working parents.

Instructor Qualifications

There have been a number of discussions regarding the qualifications of childbirth and parent educators. One of these discussions centers on the educator's personal background: should she have given birth and been a mother in order to teaching childbirth and/or parenting? In ICEA's Position Paper: The Role of the Childbirth Educator and the Scope of Childbirth Education, emphasis is placed on the "abilities and skills of the educator." The feedback from couples in working parents' classes would stress not only the educator's abilities and skills, but her empathy to the couples' situation as well. They also stress the instructor's credibility and her ability to relate real life experiences as they apply to working parenthood. Another key qualification for an instructor is her emotional approach and involvement with this subject. I believe instructors need to:

1) have heightened sensitivity to emotional and psychological postpartum adjustments, especially as they relate to working parents;

2) be nonjudgemental of parents' reasons for returning to work;

3) be accepting of parents' choice of timing for returning to work;

4) encourage parents' advocacy for initiating change in the workplace, making it more accomodating to working families;

5) show sympathy and understanding to the wide variety of working family situations, including single parenting;

6) recognize that the emotional and psychological postpartum adjustments for parents returning to work are different than those for families where one parent is staying home with the baby;

7) demonstrate empathy to expectant and new working parents and their babies;

8) encourage and promote the responsibilities of parenthood;

9) promote self-support systems for working parents;

10) be knowledgeable about the working and parenting climate in their community, including company policies, parenting classes, community resources, day care options, etc.

I would suggest that the instructor teaching working parents' classes have a background in childbirth and/or parent education or experience working with adult learners. Persons with a background in social work, community education or health education would also have a good basis for developing working parents' classes based on this curriculum.

My personal bias is that instructors who have returned to work when their children were infants will have great credibility with class participants that instructors without that experience probably will not have. This certainly does not imply that an instructor who has not worked outside her home during her children's infancy cannot effectively teach working parents' classes. However, as with many childbirth and parenting issues, those who not only have the knowledge but also first-hand experience bring reality to their teaching. Couples will know that the instructor has survived the emotional upheaval of finding day care, juggling an infant's needs with the work world, feeling guilty. I believe this tends to make the instructor more accessible to the couples. When a potential instructor with this background is available, I would suggest s/he be encouraged to teach working parents' classes.

Using the Curriculum--"Mom and Dad Go Back to Work"

"Mom and Dad Go Back to Work" is taught as a two night series, each class running for two and one half hours. As the title indicates, both parents are encouraged to take the class together. Babies are also welcome to attend.

The class draws participants in various stages of pregnancy and postpartum. The smallest number of participants are in their first trimester of pregnancy; a few couples have attended pre-pregnancy. Mid-pregnancy may be an ideal time for couples to attend a working parents' class. At that point they are not attending other childbirth education programs, which can complicate attendance at a "Mom and Dad" (or other) class. Because the expectant mothers now look pregnant and experience fetal movements, the concept of parenthood--and soon working parenthood--becomes more real. Logistically maternity/parental leaves need to be examined and decided upon during mid-pregnancy. Given the shortage of infant day care in many areas, the second trimester is a good time to address this issue.

However, the largest number of "Mom and Dad" participants are in their last months of pregnancy or have already given birth. Interestingly, these couples often comment they wish they had taken the class earlier, especially for the day care and parental leave information. Many indicate they did not hear about the class until they attended childbirth education classes. Making expectant couples aware of your classes early in their pregnancy and encouraging early attendance may alleviate this.

There is a difference in the perspective that expectant parents and new parents bring to a "Mom and Dad" class. Expectant parents are

dealing with planning; new parents deal with reality. When both groups attend the class, the exchange of information and support is especially lively.

Marketing

"Mom and Dad Go Back to Work" is marketed in a number of ways. Flyers for the program are sent to local physician/midwives' offices, clinics and hospitals. Since the class is offered through the Childbirth Education Association of Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul, each instructor is encouraged to give flyers to class participants and talk about the class. News releases are sent to a variety of newspapers in the area. Additional publicity has been gained through articles about the class in local newspapers, on television news, talk show and radio appearances. (For additional information on the flyers and posters used to promote "Mom and Dad Go Back to Work," contact CEA of Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul, 2101 Hennepin Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55405.)

There are other marketing tools that can be used for a "Mom and Dad" class. These include informing each person who requests information regarding childbirth education classes about the working parents' program. An early pregnancy class is an ideal place to talk about "Mom and Dad," perhaps offering a discount for registration at that time. Post flyers at day care centers, early childhood education programs, church nurseries or grocery store bulletin boards. Offer your services as a free speaker to women's groups/community service groups to talk about the program and its importance in early parenting. Contact human resource representatives at local companies to inquire about posting flyers there. Some companies offer a tuition

reimbursement program to their employees; "Mom and Dad" could be an interesting addition to such a program. The possibilities are endless.

Registration

Registrations for "Mom and Dad Go Back to Work" can be taken in the same manner that registrations are taken for your other childbirth and parenting classes. The registration fee should be in line with other two-night offerings. Currently CEA of Greater Minneapolis-St. Paul offers a discount on the registration fee for CEA childbirth education class participants. The fee is the same for one person or a couple.

BACK TO WORK: A GUIDE FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW WORKING PARENTS is used as a class handbook and for future reference and referrals in the "Mom and Dad Go Back to Work" classes. Each couple is encouraged to purchase their own copy of the book; however, copies are made available to participants for use during the class. If desired, the charge for BACK TO WORK could be included in the cost of the class.

When a woman/couple registers for a "Mom and Dad" class, the following information is requested, recorded on a card and sent to the instructor:

mother and father's names; home and work phone numbers; due date or baby's birth date; the date that the mother's leave begins and the length of leave; whether or not the mother plans on returning to work. Maximum registration for the class series is set at ten persons/couples. You may wish to call each couple before the class begins to confirm their registration and answer any questions they might have at that time.

Class Organization and Curriculum

Depending on the needs and size of your class, you can choose

from a number of different topic areas to design a curriculum that best suits your own teaching style and teaching environment. (The topic areas begin on page 15 .) The "Mom and Dad" class utilizes a presentation-discussion format. Instructors may choose to develop handout material for different topics to supplement information in BACK TO WORK. For example, a handout on local day care information and referrals services, as well as brochures from area day care options is very useful to class participants. Another sheet providing information about breast pumps and where they are available locally would be helpful to nursing mothers. A flip chart, blackboard or overhead can be used to record class discussions. Use those handouts or copies of articles you are familiar with, that are most appropriate to your class participants and that best fit in with your teaching style. (Be certain to request permission to reprint copyrighted materials!) Pulling together this material will help personalize your presentation of the class.

The break down of a typical "Mom and Dad" class is as follows:

NIGHT ONE

1) Introductions- 20 minutes

2) Why this class- affirmations, encouragement, challenge -10 minutes

3) Parental leave issues - 20 minutes

4) Why do I work? - 30 minutes

5) BREAK - 15 minutes

6) Day care - one hour

NIGHT TWO

1) Questions, concerns, left-over issues - 10 minutes

2) Breastfeeding and working - 30 minutes

3) Time management: introduction - 30 minutes

4) BREAK - 15 minutes

5) Time management: practice -30 minutes

6) Realities of working parenthood - 20 minutes

7) Closure, evaluation - 10 minutes

(NOTE: All times are approximate and vary depending on the needs of class participants.)

A three night series might also be feasible. This has been suggested by a number of participants in the "Mom and Dad" classes as it would allow more time for discussion and feedback after the presentation of materials in the first two classes. It has also been suggested that couples attend a two night "Mom and Dad" class prenatally and then return for an additional night or two of further discussion after their babies are born.

Single Session Classes

A second approach to covering working parent issues is to offer single session classes that deal with one particular topic each night. In this format, I offer six seminars: Negotiating a Maternity Leave; To Work or Not to Work - The New Parents Dilemma; Finding Quality Infant Day Care; Breastfeeding and the Working Mother; Time Management for Working Parents; Postpartum Parenting Issues. Each seminar is 1 1/2 hours long.

Because of the range of topics, expectant parents can choose to attend seminars at different points in their pregnancy. It is recommended that they attend the first three seminars in early and mid-pregnancy. Couples are encouraged to attend together and they do

not need to attend the seminars in any particular order. Each seminar can be offered depending on the needs and requests of your clients or on a rotating basis. Finding Quality Infant Day Care tends to be the most popular offering. The seminars can also be held in conjunction with your childbirth education programs, either as part of a series (an additional night), in the hospital for post-natal education, or with a class reunion.

Marketing and Registration

Marketing and registrations for single session classes can be done in much the same manner as for "Mom and Dad Go Back To Work." You may not need as detailed registration information for each participant as with "Mom and Dad." A discount might be offered to those who register for all the seminars you offer (for example, six seminars for the price of five) or for those who also participate in other programs you offer. Minimum and maximum registrations can be determined by the size of the room location and/or the costs incurred in running the program.

Class Organization and Curriculum

Because each seminar covers only one topic, the class content in more expansive in its coverage of each area than it is in a "Mom and Dad" class. Depending on the size of the class, the format may be predominantly instructor presentation with questions from the participants rather than a presentation-discussion format. The curriculum can be directly drawn from the discussion areas beginning on page 15. Overheads, films and slides (especially for the day care and breastfeeding seminars) and blackboards can be used as

audio-visual material. Pamphlets, brochures and other free materials on the topic area are usually made available. Appendix One in BACK TO WORK lists many groups that provide low cost or free materials for class distribution.

For each seminar, participants are given an outline of the class and, depending on the topic, handouts that have been designed by the instructor. BACK TO WORK: A GUIDE FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW WORKING PARENTS is used as a resource, although participants do not use the book during the class as they do in a "Mom and Dad Go Back to Work" series. However, if the instructor chose to use the worksheets and other information in BACK TO WORK, participants could be given the book to use in class or purchase it as a class handbook, as done in the "Mom and Dad" classes.

Incorporating Material into Classes

Material from the discussion areas can also be incorporated into current childbirth education curriculum. Each of the discussion area outlines is designed as a 1 1/2 to 2 hour presentation, so you may need to condense the information to fit your time schedule. Consider supplementing your presentation with books in your class library. Work with your community library to carry books on parenting and working parenthood. You may wish to design handouts to accompany your presentation or have posters with supplemental information around the room.

AREA 1: PARENTAL LEAVES

Perhaps in no other area is there as much misinformation and lack of information than parental leaves. Too often pregnant women/couples are relying on what they've heard or what they assume is the situation in their company. Only when they begin to closely examine leave policies do they discover a need for additional, accurate information.

Background

In 1977, as a result of a Supreme Court decision, the Pregnancy Disability Act (PDA) was passed. Before this law, pregnant women in the United States had no legal protection. They could be dismissed at any time in their pregnancy simply because they were pregnant. PDA gave women some limited protection by saying that pregnancy had to be treated by employers like any other disability (see p. 2-3, BACK TO WORK: A GUIDE FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW WORKING PARENTS). However, PDA applies only in these cases:

* where the firm is larger than fifteen employees
* where the firm currently offers short term disability coverage

It has been estimated that PDA covers only 40% of all pregnant women in the US. Consequently the majority of pregnant workers are not protected by this law.

Key issues to be aware of in regard to PDA and pregnant women:

1) For women covered by PDA, their employer must treat them like any other employee with a disability. This means their job and position, any benefits, seniority, etc. must be held open on the same basis that these are held open for another disabled employee. For

example, if Sue has her baby on the same day that John has a hernia operation, their boss cannot choose to only hold John's job open but replace Sue. Both employees are considered medically disabled.

2) Because this is a medical disability, pregnant women must get a statement from their medical attendant certifying the disability, the date the disability begins and the date it ends. For the most part, this length of time is six weeks, sometimes eight weeks in the case of a cesarean birth.

3) Pregnant women need to determine early in their pregnancy if they are covered by PDA. Many women assume they are entitled to a six week paid leave, only to find out late in their pregnancy they are not. Some firms offer only long term disability benefits. Long term disability usually begins after ninety days, which is longer than the six weeks the majority of new mothers are considered disabled. If the firm currently does not offer short term disability, it is not obligated to begin offering this benefit. Occasionally a pregnant woman will learn that she opted not to pay for short term disability coverage when she began working, as it meant an additional deduction from her paycheck.

Key issues to be aware of for pregnant women NOT covered by PDA:

1) Small firms (fewer than fifteen employees) are not required by law to offer disability coverage to their employees. This does not mean that all small firms do not offer this benefit. Pregnant women need to determine this, preferably early in their pregnancy.

2) Many small firms do not have any policy regarding short term disability or, in particular, pregnancy disability especially if the firm has not had to deal with this concept previously. Pregnant women can be encouraged to ask the firm for the industry standard, which is

the six week paid disability leave. (This is no assurance that she will receive it, however.)

Pregnant women/couples need to know specifically what their company policy--or lack of one--is and how it will affect their own leave. The information presented on p. 5-7 of BACK TO WORK is a worksheet for determining what each person's leave availability might be. The major stumbling blocks encountered by pregnant women/couples during this process seem to be:

1) Her/his immediate supervisor has never had a pregnant employee before (or a father-to-be requesting parental leave). Consequently, the supervisor is not certain what the leave policy is--or if the company even has one.

2) The company, in fact, has no defined maternity/paternity/parental leave policy. This seems to be the case in smaller companies rather than larger ones.

3) The company policy is open to a variety of interpretations. "Supervisor's discretion" is sometimes the rule in larger companies. While the firm is obligated to give the woman a pregnancy disability leave, any leave time after that is at the supervisor's discretion. The length of leave and the ramifications for taking a longer leave are dependent on the person's supervisor. There can be discrepancies in length of leave for expectant parents working in the same company if supervisors have discretion over granting extended leaves.

It is beneficial to know what the larger companies in your community offer their pregnant employees and new fathers in terms of leaves. Some personnel officers may be willing to share that information with you. Check with the business reporter of your newspaper for any information s/he might have. (That person may also

be a good contact to let know you are developing this class.) Another resource is the couples in your class.

Up and coming legislation on parental leaves can be provided in handout form, with brief discussion. (Canada and all other industrialized nations already have parental leave legislation.) Many states are considering parental leave bills, as is the United States House and Senate. On the state level, the parental leave bills are often more exclusive than inclusive. The national legislation would allow a ten week, unpaid leave with both job and position guaranteed mothers and fathers (natural and adoptive) who work in firms of fifty or more. These parents must have been employed full time for a year in advance of the leave. Copies of these bills are available through your local, state or national legislative representatives. It is appropriate to inform expectant parents about pending legislation and encourage them to make their opinions known at their state capitals and Washington.

During the discussion of current legislation, it is helpful to know what other countries offer. Since the United States is the only industrialized nation NOT to have a national parental leave policy, it is often interesting to provide information about what other countries do offer. The country often held up in highest regard is Sweden, which offers a nine month paid leave to both parents after the baby is born, benefits intact, with job security. In addition, mothers are allowed to opt for a reduced work week until the child is eight. Professor Sheila Kamerman's book (listed below) has extensive information on this aspect of parental leaves.

What to Teach

Your decision on how much time to allot to maternity/parental leave issues will depend in large part on class participants. If all the parents attending your class have already had their babies, detailed information about leaves is unnecessary. If these are expectant parents in the second or third trimesters of pregnancy, it is important to find out where they are at in regards to defining and negotiating their leaves.

The objectives of this class are to provide couples with information regarding parental leaves; to determine what leave options are available to each woman/couple; to discuss ways of optimizing leave time and making a smooth transition back to work.

If you are incorporating parental leave information into a current childbirth education curriculum, consider covering points in the outline under II, emphasizing that pregnant women/couples need to determine what their specific leave situation will be. The information under V would also be especially valuable.

I. Define the Pregnancy Disability Act and how a PDA leave affects pregnant women (see BACKGROUND, above).

II. Describe common leave options in addition to PDA (see pages 6-12, BACK TO WORK).

A. Maternity/parental leaves

B. General leave

C. Sick and vacation leaves

D. Unpaid leave

E. Encourage women/couples to put in writing what their leave plan will be, getting the signatures of all involved in the negotiation process.

III. Explore various options to extending a leave.

A. Discuss what is "industry standard" (i.e. six weeks) for most new parents.

B. Encourage women/couples to take the maximum leave time possible.

IV. Discuss returning to work on a less than full-time basis (see pages 42-46, BACK TO WORK).

A. Permanent part-time

B. Temporary part-time

C. Reduced hours

E. Negotiate changes prior to having the baby

V. Examine how to take maximum advantage of leave time (pages 15-16, BACK TO WORK) and tips on making a smooth transition into the workplace following leave (pages 16-19, BACK TO WORK).

It is important to recognize that US parental leave legislation is not without its critics. The White House Small Business Conference participants and the National Chamber of Commerce strongly oppose such legislation, feeling that any employee benefits need to be negotiated individually by companies and not mandated by legislation. Other groups feel that parental leave bills will result in discrimination against women in their childbearing years. Given that most men do not take parental leave even when it is offered, there is a strong argument made that if a company has the choice of hiring an equally qualified man or woman, the man will be chosen because of this legislation. This backlash effect is questioned by the bill's proponents since the greatest percentage of those entering the workforce are young women who employers will find it difficult not to

hire and not to replace, albeit temporarily.

For Further Reading

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AREA 2: TO WORK OR NOT TO WORK:

THE NEW PARENTS' DILEMMA

Background

This discussion encompasses many different topics and is most often led by the needs, concerns and desires of the class participants. Very few expectant parents have no ambivalent feelings about their return to work following the baby's birth. Some may already feel quite guilty about this, based on a number of factors (see Chapter 2, BACK TO WORK: A GUIDE FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW WORKING PARENTS, p. 52-54):

* their own upbringing. Ask the class how many of their own mothers worked while they were infants, toddlers or preschoolers. (I am often surprised how many did have working mothers!) Explore their feelings of going against the grain, against the still defined societal norm. If class members did have working mothers, ask for their recollections of what this meant to them, to their relationship with their mother, to their family. Accentuate the positive but be certain the negative aspects are also explored.

* timing or planning of the pregnancy. This seems to be especially true among women who are having their first child in their thirties. While that might have appeared to be the ideal timing before, these women/couples often wonder now if it would not have been wiser to have their families earlier in their career. For those with an unplanned pregnancy, going back to work may compound any ambivalent feelings they are already experiencing toward the baby. Women who had fertility problems and those who experienced a loss during a previous pregnancy (either miscarriage, stillbirth or a death of an infant) may have an especially difficult time dealing with the notion of leaving

this baby they tried so hard to conceive, carry to term or birth.

* family influences. Grandparents often are major stressors when expectant couples discuss returning to work. Siblings who have chosen to remain home with their children can also be a complicating factor. On the other side, working grandparents and working siblings can provide a great deal of support. This appears to be especially true among expectant fathers who have brothers or brothers-in-law in like circumstances.

* social influences. Friends can have a major influence on expectant parents' thought processes as they consider a return to work. If the couple has friends in similar circumstances, they are often able to share their concerns, information, resources, even day care providers. When friends are already working parents, how they handle the situation can influence the expectant couple. Friends who are stressed, have difficulty with their day care situation, or who, in general, do not handle the demands of working parenthood well may cause expectant couples to be fearful of combining baby and work. On the opposite end, friends who are doing well as working parents have a positive influence on expectant couples.

Friends who have decided not to return to work after their baby is born will also cause expectant parents to question their own decision to return. The concept of returning to work can be a volatile issue among expectant parents since the decision is often seen as a representation of basic, core values--who is best suited to raise your baby? Being sensitive to both sides of the issue when it is raised is important. (You might want to, at some point, facilitate a focus group with women who are staying home with their children and women who are returning to work. Be prepared to act as a moderator;

emotions run high on this issue!)

* workplace influences. For the most part, workplaces expect expectant women to return to work as soon as possible after the baby is born. However, some companies operate on the assumption that even if a woman says she is returning, the possibility exists that she won't. This can set up major stumbling blocks on both fronts. Some managers or supervisors may be quite vocal about telling pregnant woman what their expectations are regarding her leave and subsequent return to work. Others are uncomfortable to raise the issue and wait for the expectant mother to ask questions. Many women indicate they feel subtle but real pressure to come back right away--the sooner, the better. Said one expectant mother, "If it were up to my boss, I could have the baby after 5:00 on a Friday afternoon and then be back at work 8:00 Monday morning." Given these expectations, many pregnant couples report finding little or no support at their jobs for anything but staying with the status quo throughout pregnancy and into parenthood. While an increasing number of expectant fathers are showing interest in taking parental leaves, the workplace is generally unsupportive of such action.

What to Teach

Essentially this topic can be presented as a needs assessment, examining as many sides of the working parents issue as possible. Presenting it in this manner often helps expectant couples clarify their own issues and facillitates their thought processes.

The objectives of this class are to provide the participants with information on which to base their personal decision about returning to work; to examine reasons why people work and the impact of a baby

on these reasons; to discuss financial considerations for working parents; to explore both the positives and negatives of being a working family.

If you are incorporating information on making the decision to return to work into a current childbirth education curriculum, consider covering points I and II in the outline. Encourage couples to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of returning to work.

I. Discuss how couples feel about returning to work after their baby is born. (If there are new parents in the class, they add the extra dimension--reality--to the discussion).

A. What are your concerns about working with a baby?

B. What are your concerns about not returning to work after your baby is born?

II. Examine why the participants currently choose to work. (See Chapter 2, BACK TO WORK.)

A. Common responses include:

1. financial considerations
2. self-expectations
3. self-esteem
4. career orientation
5. socializing

B. Consider the difference in expectations of couples in the previous generation(s) and today.

1. Does this make combining working and parenthood easier?
2. Does it make it more difficult?

III. Discuss how participants' reasons for working might change after they have their baby (Chapter 2, BACK TO WORK).

A. Issues commonly raised include:

1. changing or shifting priorities (see BACK TO WORK p.103-109)

2. the best time to go back to work (see BACK TO WORK p.40-42)

3. options to working full time (see BACK TO WORK p. 42-45)

4. finding day care (BACK TO WORK, Chapter 4)

5. costs of child rearing (See BACK TO WORK, p.32-34)

(There are also a number of other worksheets or pamphlets available that describe what it costs for the first year baby care; you might wish to share one of those or compile one for class members.)

B. Potential lifestyle changes

1. for Mom

2. for Dad

(Most always the fathers who attend this class see themselves as an equal partner in the decision making process. Occasionally the dads have dominated the discussion with their concerns! Very rarely have I heard a mother indicate she was being coerced into returning to work against her will or a dad indicate he wanted his wife to stay home but she was insisting on returning. The couples also recognize that this will mean some changes in their lifestyles. This can be discussed during the second night of a "Mom and Dad" class or at the "Postpartum Parenting Issues" seminar.)

In a "Mom and Dad" class, this discussion usually requires some closure, since the move after break (which comes next) is to discussing day care. Some of the information on pages 35-39 of BACK TO WORK can be helpful at this point. Occasionally I go through the "Food for Thought" scenarios (p. 46-49) or ask couples to read them and then share their answers the next week.

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AREA 3: FINDING QUALITY INFANT DAY CARE

Finding day care is a sizeable task, one that many parents find overwhelming in that it is time consuming, physically exhausting and emotionally draining. Finding infant day care is even more demanding in that the need for infant day care outstrips the available spots in most areas of the country. It also solidifies the decision to return to work; once the expectant parents confirm their day care arrangements, it confirms they will be going back to work once the baby is born. That can be frightening, sobering and threatening to many couples.

Background

There are a number of background issues to be explored before teaching this area. They are: why infant day care is a contraversial topic among child care experts; what constitutes a quality infant day care program; corporate and governmental involvement in day care issues; day care for toddlers, preschoolers and beyond how to find quality infant day care. Chapter 4 in BACK TO WORK deals with day care.

The Day Care Controversy

Child care experts are, at this point, undecided about the long-range effects placing a child into a day care setting from infancy through age 12 can have on that child's physical, intellectual, social and psychological development. Psychologist Jay Belsky's initial studies of infants in day care were reassuring (see

Belsky, 1978. "The Effects of Day Care: A Critical Review" in CHILD DEVELOPMENT, December, 1979. "What Does Research Teach Us About Day Care?" in CHILDREN TODAY, July/August, 1979). However, Belsky is reconsidering this view and his newer research is highly controversial (see ZERO TO THREE, September, 1986; February, 1987; June 1987; contact National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, 733 15th St. NW, Suite 912, Washington, DC 20005). It indicates that some infants in day care are not as attached to their mothers as those infants who are not in day care. These findings are debated by other researchers in the field.

Most child care experts do not recommend that mother return to work before the baby is four months old. Burton White writes that mothers who return to work at six months should be working part-time and have in-home care for their infants. Edmund Ziegler from Yale University is also a proponent of at least a six month leave. T. Berry Brazelton suggests that a four month leave is minimum, with a longer leave being preferable for all concerned.

Many studies do show, however, that the quality of the day care provider(s) seems to be what makes or breaks the day care experience for youngsters of all ages. Consequently recommending to parents that they look for day care providers who meet the standards of quality care (discussed below) is crucial. Another factor that seems to make a difference is the individual temperament of the child. This is sometimes frightening to expectant parents, since their child's temperament (depending on the theories you subscribe to) is something they may have little control over. Separation anxiety should also be considered. In addition, the parents' own attitudes toward day care can have an effect on how well their child does in that setting.

From a physical health standpoint, infant, toddlers, preschoolers and older children in day care settings tend to become ill more often than children who are not otherwise in any group settings. (The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends frequent hand washings as a preventative measure, as well as careful handling and disposal of soiled diapers and clothing. Toys and anything children put into their mouths should be washed daily in hot, soapy water.) Illness of either the child or the day care provider also strikes fear into the hearts of working parents. Sick child care is slowly becoming available in some areas of the country.

Expectant working parents need to know that currently there is no good, solid base of evidence that shows day care is all good or all bad for an infant. They do need to know the importance of choosing the best possible day care environment for their child, based on a number of factors.

What Constitutes Quality Day Care?

Researchers continually point to the day care provider as the single most important factor in any day care (or preschool) program. A good day care provider will recognize that while s/he is a caregiver, s/he is also a child rearer. Parents can look for the following adult-child interaction patterns (see Klass. "Childrearing Interactions Within Developmental Home- or Center-Based Early Education" in YOUNG CHILDREN, March, 1987. "What is Curriculum for Infants in Family Day Care or Elsewhere?" in YOUNG CHILDREN, July, 1987.):

* physical intimacy. Physical contact--holding, rocking, hugging, carrying--are crucial to an infant's development. Caregivers

should express affection to their charges through such gentle physical contact. Sensitive human interaction is essential. (Sometimes parents will raise the issue of child abuse in day care settings. This is especially frightening for parents of infants, since babies cannot verbalize what happens to them in day care. I find this a highly sensitive issue and encourage parents to trust their instincts when choosing a provider but to remain alert and immediately deal with concerns of any nature that they might have.)

* spontaneous conversation. Singing, cooing, repeating rhyming words, responding to the litle sounds that the baby makes are very important to the infant's development. In this way the caregiver teaches the baby friendliness and language development, letting the baby know that the world is a place that makes people feel good about themselves.

* praise. Infants need to be told how wonderful all the little things they do are, so they will repeat them, expand on them and grow. Smiling and looking into the baby's eyes give encouragement and praise.

* assistance. The caregiver provides assistance to the infant so the infant can successfully complete a task, as small as they are initially.

* stimulation. According to the YOUNG CHILDREN article, infants do not need infant stimulation toys per se; these may overstimulate a baby. Infants do need a normal amount of personal care and stimulation. This happens best where the infant/adult ratio permits extensive personal involvement and where the day care provider is comfortable holding and playing with her babies.

* awareness of needs and response. The day care provider is

comfortable letting the baby take the lead in terms of curiosity. S/he helps to meet the baby's needs and to satisfy, within reason, the baby's wants.

* consistency and reliability. The day care provider responds to the baby's needs in a way that is consistent with parental interactions and home values. S/he also meets these needs in a similar fashion each time, enabling the baby to build a trust relationship with the provider.

Reliability not only refers to the interaction process between child and care giver. It also means that the provider will continue in his/her job, at the designated hours, over a period of time. Turn over in caregivers can be distressing not only to parents, but to their babies as well.

* loving and caring. The day care provider truly enjoys what s/he is doing and genuinely cares for the children--and their families--that she takes care of. While no one can love a child with the same magnitude as that child's parents, there should be an interplay of affection between the caregiver and the children.

Corporate/Government Initiatives

The high cost and shortage of quality child care are two overwhelming problems faced by parents. Financial assistance programs are attractive to a diverse workforce because they provide a variety of child-care options. In the United States, however, only about 3,000 companies provide any kind of child care assistance program. A handful of corporations have on-site day care. This issue is being addressed in more business periodicals and at least one magazine, NATION'S BUSINESS, called child care "the corporate benefit of the 1990's." Encouraging working parents to lobby for child care benefits

is not inappropriate.

There are a number of bills dealing with providing day care assistance funds, licensing and guidelines for day care centers and homes, and alliances of day care workers pending. Your local or national representative can provide you with information about current initiatives.

Day care for Infants, Toddlers and Beyond

If you have no experience with the different day care options available in your area, it is important that you find out the following:

* what kind of day care is generally available for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school aged children? How many children are cared for in their homes and by a relative or non-relative? in another person's home, by a relative or non-relative? in a day care center? in a before and/or after school based program? What is the staff/children ratio in each of these options?

* how are these programs regulated? Are there municipal, county or state guidelines? How are these enforced? Are most providers licensed or unlicensed? What kinds of support groups/programs are available to day care providers in your area?

* what are the average fees for each kind of program?

* what kind of stability/continuity is there for each kind of program?

* how do working parents feel about each kind of program?

Visit as many of the programs as possible in your community. There is a wide variation in the quality of programs, in the physical environments and in the providers themselves. Your own knowledge and

first hand experience with touring day care situations will be important when you work with expectant parents.

What to Teach

The objectives for this class are to provide participants with information about placing an infant in day care; to discuss the positives and negatives of day care options available in the community; to list the aspects of day care most important to parents as they place their child; to list questions that can be asked during an interview; to discuss the importance of checking references; to examine the ongoing relationship between the day care provider and family.

If you are incorporating information on finding infant day care into a current childbirth education curriculum, consider covering the points in the outline under II. Supplemental material, especially pamphlets and flyers from area day care facilities and providers, will be helpful. Emphasize the importance of parental involvement in the day care search and on a continuing basis as day care becomes part of the family structure.

I. Briefly discuss the day care controversy as it applies to placing infants in day care (see BACKGROUND, above).

II. Present the "how-to" aspects of finding day care (see pages 70-90 in BACK TO WORK).

A. Where are babies cared for?

B. What's important to us in the care of our baby?

C. What should we ask during an interview?

D. Why a phone call first?

E. The actual interview

F. Checking references/optional second interviews

G. Making the day care decision

III. Emphasize the importance of the on-going responsibility of parents to work with and supervise their day cre situation.

A. Develop a positive relationship with the day care provider(s).

B. Spend time at the day care environment each day.

C. Never leave your child in what you feel is a compromising situation.

Brochures from the various local day care options, including resource, information and referral services, are valuable. These are usually available for free by calling these day care homes/centers.

There are a few videos about finding day care now commercially available. However, these are quite expensive. A local information and referral service may have a video or slide presentation that you might borrow. You might also consider developing your own set of slides, using pictures from a variety of day care environments in your community.

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AREA 4: BREASTFEEDING AND WORKING

If you are teaching a "Mom and Dad" class format, ascertain on the first night of class how many mothers plan on breastfeeding or are considering breastfeeding. Especially if expectant mothers are ambivalent, this is an important topic to include in your curriculum. However, if class participants indicate this is not an option they have chosen, then leave this topic out of your curriculum for this particular class. Working mothers usually have enough things to feel guilty about without adding the decision not to breastfeed to their list.

Good background information on breastfeeding is important, since many of the topics discussed in class rely on this knowledge. If, for example, the mothers do not know how milk can be expressed, discussion of expressing at work can be difficult--and confusing to participants. Realistically many couples have not done much reading about breastfeeding or have not attended a class on breastfeeding before they come to a working parents' class. If possible, contact participants and encourage them to take a breastfeeding class or read a book on breastfeeding in advance of the class dealing with breastfeeding and working. Have available to them a list of classes offered locally and/or a suggested reading list of books on breastfeeding.

Combining Breastfeeding and Working

Mothers can combine breastfeeding and working in a number of ways. These include:

1) bringing the baby to work. This is feasible in very few situations, although it is always worth mentioning to couples as an option.

2) having the baby brought to work when s/he needs to be nursed. Again, this is possible in very few situations (for example, if the mother's workplace is close to the day care situation).

3) going to day care to nurse the baby during the work day. This is another option used infrequently, but is a definite advantage of on-site day care or day care within walking distance/five minute car ride from the mother's workplace. Leaving work to nurse requires extremely flexible and understanding co-workers and supervisors.

4) nursing the baby while at home and expressing milk while at work. A number of mothers choose this option. It requires that the mother has a comfortable place to express milk, appropriate storage for expressed milk (refrigeration may not be necessary, according to newly published research) and a somewhat flexible work schedule. It also requires that the mother has become adept at expressing milk, either with a pump or manually, before she returns to work.

Often pregnant women expect they will be able to express up to eight ounces at each pumping and are surprised to learn that they may be able to accumulate about six to eight ounces over four or more expressings during the day. It is important they have a realistic view of what their milk production might be like and how expressing differs from the baby's nursing in emptying the breast. They need to know approximately how long each expressing will take (at least twenty

minutes). Providing information on combining formula and breastmilk is beneficial.

5) nursing while at home and not expressing milk at work. This is the option which many mothers end up choosing, sometimes after they begin expressing at work and finding that is not a viable option. Mothers need to be encouraged to continue breastfeeding even if they cannot express at work. They may be told, sometimes by health care providers, that if they are going back to work then they might as well quit nursing, especially if they run into some difficulties with nursing during the first few weeks. Let these moms know that their bodies will gradually become accustomed to this nursing cycle and that the baby will receive appropriate nourishment with breastmilk and supplemental formula. Mothers who choose this option need to know about expressing for comfort, which is important in preventing breast engorgement and infection. They also can be encouraged to express milk perhaps once or twice a day, if that fits into their work schedule more effectively.

A "Return to Work" Plan

Encourage women to breastfeed frequently while they are home on leave. (I often tell them that if they do nothing but sit in their rockers and nurse the baby for six weeks, that's six weeks well spent.) Mothers who are returning in less than six weeks especially need to nurse frequently during that time. If they are not planning on expressing or nursing during the day when they return to work, they may want to cut back on nursing the week before their return. This can help Mom's body become accustomed to what the new nursing schedule will be like. The following outlines such a cut back plan. However,

for mothers who are returning in six weeks or less, no cut back of nursing should be recommended before their return to work as these mothers are still establishing their milk supply.

* Nurse as much as possible/as the baby wants before 8 AM (or whatever time Mom would leave for work).

* Bottle feed at the next feeding. It is sometimes preferable to have someone other than Mom give the baby the bottle--a good opportunity to try out the day care provider. You may want to encourage bottle feeding at all times by someone other than Mom to strengthen the baby's nursing attachment to mother, especially when the baby is very young. Feed the baby whatever is planned for feedings while Mom is at work--breast milk or formula. (Formula introduction and usage should be done in conjunction with recommendations from the baby's doctor.)

* Nurse at the next feeding. Mom may need to express for comfort in between the bottle feeding and this breastfeeding. Depending on your class, you might discuss the difference between expressing for comfort purposes and expressing to save breastmilk.

* Bottle feed at the next feeding.

* Depending on the time of day, breastfeed at this feeding. If it is mid-afternoon, Mom may wish to express and substitute a bottle feeding at this time.

* Nurse as much as the baby cares to during the evening and night hours.

As with any situation, these suggestions should be varied depending on the individual mother and baby. Parents can be encouraged to use some trial and error to find what will work best for their family, but to have faith in the breastfeeding process. Women

who are returning to work part-time are often concerned that their schedules, which do not provide for consistency and stability, will prevent them from nursing. Encouragement and support can provide the difference in maintaining the nursing relationship.

The "Typical" Workday

If the couples are familiar with the mechanics of breastfeeding, talk them through what a "typical" workday might be like. This can include the following:

* Nurse as much as the baby wants to nurse during the night. There is one theory that proposes Mom wake a sleeping baby during the night to nurse, activating "reverse-cycle" feedings where the baby will get most of his/her nursing done during the night and subsequently nurse less during the day when Mom is at work. Some babies operate on this schedule without any encouragement. However, lack of sleep and uninterrupted sleep take a heavy toll on any mother, including her ability to produce milk. I do not recommend this pattern.

* Try to get in two nursings before Mom leaves for work, perhaps one when the baby first wakes up and then another right before leaving home or arriving at day care.

* Express milk at times when the baby would nurse OR express for comfort during the day at work. Mothers should not substitute expressing milk for lunch.

* Drink at least eight to ten eight ounce glasses of fluids during the day to maintain milk supply. Avoid caffinated beverages, soft drinks with empty calories, etc.

* Have a nutritious snack about one hour leaving work--a

sandwich, yogurt, cheese and crackers, etc. Parents should request that their day care provider not feed their baby in the late afternoon so s/he will be hungry when they pick him up.

* Nurse the baby as soon as possible after arriving either at home or at day care.

* Nurse again right after dinner and then as many as the baby wants before s/he goes to sleep.

Remind Moms that it takes awhile for their bodies to adjust to this new schedule; consequently sweaters over blouses, blazers, even emergency change of clothing can be suitable work attire for the first few weeks.

What to Teach

The objectives for teaching this class are to emphasize the benefits of breastfeeding over bottle feeding; to discuss the various options available to working mothers for combining breastfeeding and working; to describe methods of expressing breastmilk; to encourage breastfeeding mothers to find the combination of working and nursing that most appropriately fits their family's lifestyle; to discuss comfort nursing; to emphasize the importance of good nutrition, proper rest and support in continuing breastfeeding after a return to work; to discuss questions and concerns expectant and new mothers have regarding working and nursing.

If you are incorporating information on combining breastfeeding and working into a current childbirth education curriculum, consider covering the points in the outline under II. Special encouragement to initiate breastfeeding should be given expectant working mothers. The importance of support from the working father should be emphasized.

I. Briefly discuss the benefits of breastfeeding over bottle feeding.

A. Emphasize the "built-in" interaction times that breastfeeding provides a working mother and her infant!

B. A short film or slide presentation on breastfeeding basics may be appropriate, depending on the knowledge level of participants.

II. Outline the various options for combining breastfeeding and working (see BACKGROUND, above).

A. Expressing and storing breastmilk.

1. manual expression

(Emphasize the importance of expressing from all areas of the breast to avoid breast infection. You may want to include signs that indicate a possible breast infection and what nursing mothers should do.)

2. expressing with breastpumps

(Provide participants with a list of breast pumps and where these are available locally.)

B. Encourage mothers to choose the option that realistically will best fit their schedules.

1. the work environment can help or hinder milk expression

(Some mothers will be comfortable talking about breastfeeding with their supervisor and co-workers while others will not. The impact this has on their feeding decision should be discussed.)

2. choose a day care provider who is supportive of breastfeeding

III. Present information on the "typical" workday (see BACKGROUND, above).

IV. Discuss the back to work plan (see BACKGROUND, above).

*Include fathers in the discussion, emphasizing the supportive role they play in encouraging breastfeeding. Ask them for suggestions of how they can help out so that Mom can combine nursing and working.

V. Questions and answers.

A. What to do on weekends?

1. keep to the weekday schedule
2. nurse full-time all weekend
3. present advantages and disadvantages to both

B. What about formula feeding?

1. how to make formula
2. sterilizing bottles and nipples
3. storing formula

C. Will the baby prefer bottle over the breast or vice-versa?

As with any discussion of breastfeeding, emphasizing knowledge and the importance of desire and support are essentials. Encourage expectant mothers to initiate breastfeeding, even if they feel unable to continue once they return to work. Sometimes they find breastfeeding is more manageable than they had anticipated and choose to continue. It can be emotionally difficult for a mother to wean prior to her return to work; you might want to raise that issue and the timing of weaning.

It also is advisable to give participants a list of breastfeeding classes, support groups and consultants in the community. As the number of lactation consultants grow, their services are very beneficial especially to breastfeeding working mothers.

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AREA 5: TIME MANAGEMENT FOR WORKING PARENTS

Background

Most expectant parents are already feeling a time pinch as they approach the end of their pregnancy. There aren't enough hours in the day to finish all their work, furnish the nursery, attend childbirth education classes, do some reading, see friends, freeze meals--and the list goes on. Time management is one of the "tangible" issues that both expectant and new parents see as a potential stumbling block in combining working and parenting. (Day care tends to be the other.) While some expectant parents feel that having a baby won't change their lives, they may see the advantage of bringing some time management into their work and home worlds. This provides an ideal opportunity to reinforce the importance of time for baby, spouse and family as well as the need for work time. Other expectant parents fear the addition of a baby to their already too crowded lives. Helping these families set priorities and examine their schedules can be beneficial.

Most studies that look at the amount of time working parents spend on other than work responsibilities indicate that women are still shouldering the lion's (or lioness's) share of the work at home and with the children. One study showed that working fathers spend approximately six minutes more per day on home-related activities than their counterparts 20 years ago did! The concrete methods of showing where time goes can sometimes stimulate discussion in this area.

Once couples see where their time goes, the discussion can turn to defining priorities. The purpose of time management, at least as it is approached in working parents' classes, is not to give couples more time for things they have to do, but rather to find time to spend

on things they want to do--like spend time with their new baby, with each other and themselves. This often means making changes in their lifestyles, both at work and at home. Since having a baby is a change in and of itself, encouraging change in other parts of a couple's life can be difficult unless they themselves are able to define the benefits.

Some couples perceive change as threatening. Change takes the status quo and makes it different. Even where the change is a joyful one, such as having a baby, people often experience an internal resistance to change. It is not uncommon for expectant and new working parents to indicate they can't change workplace expectations or the expectations they place on themselves and each other, both at work and at home. Especially for expectant parents there is some concern that the uncertainty of a baby's schedule--or a continual, constant change--will cause upheaval in their lives. These couples may wonder how to control that uncertainty. For example, they may ask how soon can they get the baby to sleep through the night or when they can expect the "bonding process" to be completed.

In these circumstances, the challenge for the instructor is to encourage time management as a tool for setting priorities. The top priority for working parents should be their baby and establishing their family, with workplace and home demands coming afterward. Presenting the early days of parenting realistically is important, but do emphasize the transitory nature of infancy. Encourage parents to enjoy the memories they are making and not be too anxious to rush their interactions with the baby. Your positive attitude about parenting can make a significant impact on expectant and new parents ability to juggle priorities. The bottom line is that they do have

control over how their time is spent, if they are willing to assume that responsibility and all that goes with it. When parents indicate to me that they can't change things, I remind them that this is an active choice they are making. They then should be willing to accept the ramifications of that decision. Many times putting it in the perspective of making a choice helps them see they can, in fact, effect some time management in their schedule and re-vamp their priorities.

Information on setting priorities and the fine art of juggling is covered on pages 102-108, BACK TO WORK: A GUIDE FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW WORKING PARENTS. Some working parents have difficulty delegating home, work or baby care responsibilities. Discussing the need to relinquish the "old ways" and together find "new ways" more appropriate to their developing lifestyle can be helpful. Quite often expectant and new parents have trouble letting go of work responsibilities because they are afraid doing so would indicate to co-workers they can no longer function in the same capacities they did pre-baby. Some work environments are more open and supportive than others; this is something parents need to judge. But they also need encouragement to explore new ways of juggling priorities at work as well as at home.

On the home front, relinquishing can be a major issue for couples. Depending on how long the couple has been married, they may have established routines and job divisions without much discussion. Becoming working parents can provide them with a positive opportunity to examine their rituals, looking for ways to become more efficient. Giving up their present system can be difficult. Real-life examples of how you or other working parents have dealt with these issues are

beneficial in these discussions.

Working parents often share a wide range of concerns associated with relinquishing housework and sharing child care duties. Their own upbringing and self-expectations play a substantial role in such division of duties. Encourage the participants to look at the broad picture; ask them to think about what they want their children to remember when the children are grown. You may ask them to recall some of their favorite memories of parent-child activities when they were growing up. Probably none will be associated with housework (in fact these may be some of their least favorite memories). Let them know they have the choice to relinquish the present system in order to make way for the new. Also let them know this is often easier said than done.

The one priority area many working parents forget to put on their list is "self." Discuss the need to replenish and nourish oneself in order to maintain relationships with others. Most stress management techniques emphasize the need for time for oneself as part of the daily routine. You might want to introduce the concept of affirmations and encourage participants to work with these. Jean Isley Clarke's book SELF-ESTEEM, A FAMILY AFFAIR (Winston Press) deals extensively with this idea.

Pages 110-116 of BACK TO WORK list a variety of "reality tamers" and other ways to facillitate combining working and a new baby. You may want to have participants list some "life savers," which can be convenience foods, a dishwasher, having the house cleaned. Then include a list of "life savors," things that help all working parents stop and smell the roses occasionally--a long, hot soak in the tub, a walk through crunchy leaves on a fall afternoon, breakfast in bed on a

weekday morning. Emphasize the importance of passing life savors along to all our children.

What to Teach

The objectives of teaching time management for working parents are: to help new and expectant parents realize that they can effect some control in their schedules; to define priorities for expectant and new working parents; to examine ways of effectively managing time; to discuss the need for priority areas to include time for self and spouse; to encourage a committment to family as a top priority in working parents' lives.

If you are incorporating information on time management into a current childbirth education curriculum, consider covering the points in the outline under III A, IV and V. You might want to have couples do time charts or "pies" the week before you discuss this topic. Encourage couples to make their baby the top priority in their lives as the benefit of time management.

I. Introduce the concept of time management

A. Time management is a positive way of getting things done
B. In order to manage time, you need to know where it goes

II. Ask a class participant (currently working outside the home) to tell you how s/he spent yesterday (or today)

A. Include all 24 hours

B. Graph it on the board (overhead) in a pie chart (p. 102, BACK TO WORK).

*You might also ask each class participant to do this themselves and then have one participant share their "pie" with the group.

C. Discuss the difference between the "needs" and "wants" in

terms of time management.

1. the "needs" will always be there

2. important to daily schedule time for the "wants"

3. ask group about implications of ignoring the "wants" in our personal lives

D. If a new mother is in class, ask her to share her pie and compare it to the work pie. (If there are no new parents in class, you will need to draw a pie for comparison.)

1. discuss differences in the two pies

2. discuss how the two pies can be combined when mom has returned to work

III. The importance of setting priorities

A. Ask class participants what are the priority areas in their lives, both now and after the baby is born (see page 103, BACK TO WORK).

1. work

2. home

3. baby (or family, including spouse)

4. social

5. self

B. Brainstorming the tasks that fit under each category.

*You can do this with one category, as an example; "baby" or "self" are easier to work with in class than "house" or "work."

1. discuss eliminating

2. discuss delegating

3. discuss simplifying (see BACKGROUND, above)

IV. Ask participants how they go about prioritizing tasks.

A. Discuss list making (page 104, BACK TO WORK)

B. Discuss follow through and trust.

V. Discuss reality tamers (see BACK TO WORK, p.111-113)

A. Examine how time management can help with energy and stress management (see BACK TO WORK, p. 114-116)

B. Talk about the difference between life savers and life savors (see BACKGROUND, above)

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AREA 6: POSTPARTUM ISSUES FOR WORKING PARENTS

Background

A 1987 survey of expectant couples I conducted indicated that the two issues that most concerned these parents-to-be regarding a return to work following their baby's birth were bonding and postpartum as these specifically related to working parenthood. Before the baby's birth couples were identifying attachment issues as important. While this may be expected of potential parents, expectant working parents place special emphasis on this issue because of the limited time they feel they have to attach with their infant before returning to work. They not only want to know about bonding, but they want to know about maximizing its effects in minimal time.

Postpartum issues are often approached in the same manner by mothers-to-be. "How fast can I get through this?" is a question that has been asked more than once. These mothers are aware of what will happen physically during postpartum, but they often want to speed up the process. "If I'm going back to work after six weeks, I can't still be in maternity clothes," one expectant mother lamented. "And I can't afford an interim wardrobe. What can I do now so that I can be back in my regular clothes?"

Still other expectant parents are concerned about losing sleep when they are awakened for night feedings. Quite often they ask how soon can the baby be expected to sleep through the night and what they can do to facilitate that process.

The focus changes dramatically for new parents. Emotional aspects of postpartum and bonding are what they are currently

experiencing--and what all too often they admit they were unprepared for. "No one could have told me how much I'd love this baby. I can't imagine going back to work now and leaving him anywhere," one mother shared in a "Mom and Dad" class.

As stated in the introduction, much research indicates that it is very difficult for expectant parents to focus on postpartum issues. However, new parents in the throes of returning to work may be "ripe" for a class on postpartum issues as they pertain to working parents. Marketing the class in this fashion, if it is offered as a single session, may be appropriate. In a "Mom and Dad Go Back to Work" format, you may find that postpartum issues are dealt with continually, as they arise during discussion of the other topics rather than as a session by itself.

Bonding and Attachment

Regardless of what they are told, the majority of expectant parents imagine themselves with the "textbook" baby. This is the infant that sleeps through the night from birth, takes two long naps during the day, eats every four hours (no sooner, no later), hardly ever cries and follows the developmental scales and charts to a "T." Someone else in their childbirth education class can have the baby with colic, the baby who refuses to nurse, the baby who gets days and nights mixed up. Not us, no thank you. Because the textbook baby also has an "easy" temperament, attachment is an effortless process.

It is important for expectant and new parents to realize that there are temperament and personality differences in infants and that these significantly impact on how parent and baby get along. Realizing that not all babies are alike and that, in fact, treating

the baby like an individual, with very unique needs, from birth is a positive approach to parenting. Encouraging parents to find their own special ways of bonding can be helpful to expectant and new working parents who are especially concerned about doing things "right." Working parents can also be encouraged to not only think about bonding but the concept of attachment as well, a life-long process that does not end after six weeks (or however long Mom's leave is).

Some discussion of developing a mutual philosophy of parenting is also in order. This is usually not an issue expectant parents have considered in great depth. Encourging growth in parenting skills, a gradual process that takes place as the baby grows and changes, can be reassuring. But since child development experts recommend that an infant's day care situation have similar values and parenting styles to those found at home, this is an important issue to consider antepartum as well as postpartum. Recommend a wide variety of parenting books (see Appendix Two, BACK TO WORK: A GUIDE FOR EXPECTANT AND NEW WORKING PARENTS and ICEA BOOKMARKS). If parenting classes are offered in the community, encourage parents to take advantage of these. (Communicate with these programs the need to establish evening classes for working parents with babies, if they have not done so already. This networking can strengthen both programs!)

Parents as Primary Caregivers

T. Berry Brazelton has written about his concern that some expectant working parents are not attaching to their babies during the pregnancy. Brazelton feels the reason is that these parents are perhaps afraid to, since they don't want to experience the pain of separation when they return to work. An additional concern I have is

that some expectant parents now see their primary responsibility to their infant is to find day care. Once they do that, they expect to return to their pre-baby lifestyle, fitting the baby into that schedule. I would agree with Brazelton that many of these parents are motivated by fear. They are afraid of the impending change in their lifestyle that the baby is going to bring. Work is a safe haven; expectations there are clear and comfortable. Other parents are afraid they will want to stay home once the baby is born, something many feel they cannot afford financially to do. Still others are concerned about the change in the marriage that a new baby often brings. Some are fearful that their baby will view the day care provider as "Mommy." There are expectant parents who realistically view the time demands of working with a new baby. Since the workplace is fairly inflexible, they anticipate that the family will accomodate work roles. By relinqishing the role of primary caregiver, or deciding that role has a single dimension, expectant and new parents may be protecting themselves.

Promoting the role of primary caregiver to expectant and new working parents is important to do. Often times parents are relieved to hear that working parents are still their child's primary caregiver and that the primary bonds of attachment will be formed with them. They also need to know, however, that this will not happen magically and that it requires a shifting of priorities to put the baby/family first. This emphasis and encouragement is a necessary part of the discussion.

Physical Postpartum

Many new mothers return to work sometime between their baby's

birth and about three months postpartum. Since they want to make the most of their leave time, they want information on dealing with postpartum discomforts.

For the most part, mothers are concerned with their physical appearance. They need to develop realistic expectations about what their body will look like six to sixteen weeks postpartum. Indicate that each person recovers from childbirth differently. Recommend community exercise programs that specialize in classes for new mothers (and their babies). Remind these mothers of the importance of good nutrition, especially if they are nursing. Nursing mothers can be encouraged to dress in layers for work, in case their breasts leak, or to bring a change of clothing.

Lack of sleep is something both expectant and new parents are rightfully concerned about. Many child care books indicate that babies sleep through the night around three to six months. The weekend switch method (p. 115, BACK TO WORK) can be suggested as one way of catching up on sleep. Encouraging time management techniques and relinquishing other chores in order to get a nap may be helpful.

Interpersonal Relationships

Not surprisingly, studies show a high degree of marital dissatisfaction following the birth of a baby. There is so little time for anything outside of the baby during the first weeks (or months) postpartum. This lack of time is exacerbated when the new parents both return to work. Any additional time they might have had together is now spent at work, with the baby or on household responsibilities.

Often working parents feel guilty about spending time alone

together since they are away from their baby all day long. They need to be encouraged that this time together strengthens their family and without it, their relationships with the baby will suffer. New fathers, in particular, express feelings of neglect and isolation. One expectant dad indicated that his wife was getting all the attention during her pregnancy. He expected this attention would transfer to the baby, still leaving him out in the cold. Mothers sometimes need a little enlightenment on this issue. Discuss with parents a variety of ways they can have some alone time, some of which will require babysitters but others that might be done during the workday (see pages 122-125, BACK TO WORK).

And if working parents, in particular mothers, feel guilty about taking time to be with each other, they feel even guiltier (if that's possible) about taking time to be alone. Again, help parents to recognize the importance of communicating with themselves. Self-esteem issues for new parents indicate the need for fulfillment on many levels and in many capacities. Too much of any good thing--even a new baby--means that some other good things are being passed by.

The topic of feeling guilty is one that expectant and new working parents usually bring up, without fail, in all variety of class sessions. To that end, I do not cover "guilt" as an issue by itself, but rather choose to deal with the potential or actual guilt feelings in the context that parents introduce these. Pages 53-55 of BACK TO WORK give some suggestions for working out and working with guilt feelings.

Communication skills need to be examined when interpersonal relationships are discussed. Examine the many different ways parents

can communicate with their baby, each other and themselves (see pages 118-133, BACK TO WORK). Discuss postpartum as an ideal time to re-assess communication patterns, giving each family member the opportunity to establish more positive ways of communicating with each other.

What to Teach

The objectives for teaching postpartum parenting issues are: to discuss how postpartum is affected by a return to work; to describe what bonding is and how parents and infants establish a bond with each other; to examine how the parenting relationship is as ever growing, every changing one; to discuss how other interpersonal relationships might change during postpartum; to describe ways of positively effecting family communications.

If you are incorporating information on attachment and postpartum working parent issues into an current childbirth education curriculum, consider covering points in the outline under I B, II B, III A, B, C. Stress the universality of the postpartum experience for all parents. Encourage working parents to place the emphasis in their lives on parenting during the postpartum period--and beyond!

I. What is postpartum?

A. Textbook definition of postpartum

B. What working parents can do to help themselves during postpartum

1. arrange for help at home during this period
2. let go of other responsibilities
3. don't contact the workplace or let them contact you without permission

4. simplify lifestyles

5. catch up on sleep

6. arrange for help again when you return to work

II. Attachment and working parents

A. Define attachment

B. Attachment as a life-long process (see BACKGROUND, above)

C. Develop a mutual philosophy of parenting (see p. 118-122, BACK TO WORK)

III. Meet your mate and yourself--again

A. The importance of your relationship with each other

1. why it needs to be re-established

2. why it needs nurturing

3. why you shouldn't feel guilty

B. The importance of your relationship with yourself

1. why it needs to be re-established

2. why it needs nurturing

3. why you shouldn't feel guilty

4. why you need help from your spouse in order to do this and

5. why you should help your spouse in return

C. Positive communication skills

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